



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

April 2, 2024

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

You are aware of the unfathomable loss of life that has been taking place in the Holy Land. Pope Francis has issued several statements since October 2023 regarding the growing and continuous violence, and he has called for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East. The Vatican has offered to act as a mediator for Israel and Palestine.

In the very land where Christ walked and lived during his earthly ministry and poured out his life for our redemption, there are thousands of men, women and children who are suffering and dying through no fault of their own. I urge all world leaders, in unity with the pope and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, to take necessary action to ensure peace and the protection of human life in every corner of the globe. I ask for this especially in countries caught in the destructive grasp of war and conflict.

I want to address the people of our diocese and all people of goodwill. Consider our shared calling to bring the peace of Christ to a world that has been divided by the adversary's influence and by our human brokenness. We live in a world that encourages us to indulge ourselves at the cost of the well-being of those around us. This becomes a me-first polarization of thought and causes us to turn against each other without mercy. The effects of original sin, human stubbornness and pride have caused generations of hatred.

But Jesus taught that “you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:37-39). We have been transformed by the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. We must put aside our personal differences and make sacrifices for our neighbor, even if it causes us discomfort.

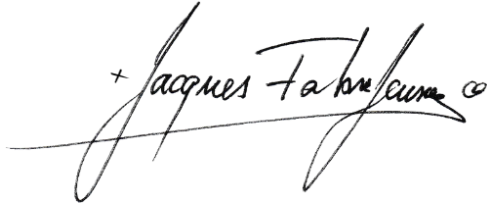
We all are God's children, created in his divine image, and we must never forget this reality. We should never wish evil, violence or death on others, but only desire for them the peace of God and life in his presence. St. Paul reminds us, “Do not let the sun set on your anger, and do not leave room for the devil” (Eph 4:26-27). I urge you to break the cycles of division that echo throughout human existence. Display Christian charity towards one another in your discussions of world issues, politics, religion, and every necessary and important aspect of human flourishing. Think of ways that you — in your own capacity, thoughts and actions — can bring about change for the good of others without hesitation.

We cannot be good neighbors without first purifying our own hearts and minds. In times of division and atrocity such as this, it is vital to frequent the holy sacraments, especially reconciliation and the Eucharist. Never cease to pray and fast for peace in our world as we make concerted efforts to walk the narrow way. We find the assurance of our purpose only under the banner of Christ. Every part of our existence is ordered to know, love and serve God — *and our neighbor*. This is the reason we condemn all acts of violence, especially those directed towards innocent people.

I ask you to work to bring peace to your homes and communities, so that it ripples out to a world in need. Let us reclaim souls for Christ the King through faith and good works.

Mary, Mother of Sorrows, pray for us.

In Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Jacques Fabre-Jeune" followed by a small circular mark.

Most Rev. Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS
Bishop of Charleston